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Gang Members Receive Lengthy Prison Terms for Violent Wilmington Crime Spree

Delaware's anti gang law helped secure enhanced penalties for defendants

Wilmington – Attorney General Beau Biden today announced that three members of a Wilmington gang received lengthy prison sentences for a series of violent crimes they committed in a street “war” with a rival group which resulted in at least five gun battles, the shooting deaths of two individuals, and other crimes in the spring of 2010. Among other offenses, the defendants were convicted of Gang Participation, a criminal charge that targets organized crime by enhancing jail sentences for members of street gangs that destabilize communities and terrorize residents.

This case was initially opened by Wilmington Police as an investigation of the April, 2010 shooting death of Alvan Butcher. Police expanded the scope of the investigation after detectives uncovered evidence that the suspects were operating as a criminal gang and that they had conspired to commit increasingly violent crimes in the City. The defendants were members of “Trapstars”, a group of friends in Wilmington who initially formed a rap group but turned to selling drugs to finance their music, and ultimately to violent crime, including robbery and murder.

After members of a rival group known as “Pope’s Group” robbed a Trapstars Wilmington stash house in December, 2009, taking weapons, drugs, and cash, members of Trapstars responded by targeting their rivals in a “war” that led to a series of violent retaliatory shootings in the spring of 2010. On April 5, 2010, armed members of Trapstars targeted members of Pope's Group in the area of Third and Harrison Streets, resulting in the shooting death of Alvan Butcher, age 20, in the 1200 block of West 3rd Street. This killing prompted reprisals, including an April 30, 2010 shooting that involved victims Jasmon Smith and Kenneth Swanson. On May 3, 2010, Trapstars member Kevin Rasin fired multiple shots into a car he associated with Pope's Group that was stopped at a traffic light in the 800 block of North Adams Street, killing its leader, 25 year-old Jose Charriez. When police investigated a May 6, 2010, shooting in the 800 block of North Adams Street that wounded Trapstars member Marc Taylor a weapon was found that had been used in the April and May incidents. Ultimately the police investigation uncovered evidence of organized criminal activity by members of Trapstars that took place between April, 2008 and August, 2010.

“Residents of Wilmington deserve to be safe in their homes and have the right to let their children walk through their neighborhoods without fear for their safety,” Attorney General Biden said. “I’m pleased that the excellent work of our dedicated team of prosecutors and the Wilmington Police have taken down this violent drug dealing criminal gang and removed the threat from this group from our streets.”

The defendants were charged with the crime of Gang Participation, which is used to prosecute individuals who as members of a street gang commit a pattern of violent crimes. Through this charge, prosecutors can present evidence demonstrating the overall scope of criminal activity that the gang is committing. In this case, prosecutors were able to present evidence of extensive drug dealing activity that members of the Trapstars were engaged in over several years leading up to the violent shooting incidents in 2010. A conviction on the charge of Gang Participation enhances the jail time defendants face for their related crimes by increasing the severity of those other charges by one felony level.

“Rampant shootings and gang violence are destroying the fabric of our communities. Thanks to the outstanding work of the Wilmington Police Detectives and Deputy Attorneys General Ipek Medford, John Downs, and Sarita Wright, the Trapstars reign has come to an end. This should be a message, loud and clear, that we will utilize all tools available in the fight to end violence on our City streets,” said State Prosecutor Kathleen Jennings.

“I want to recognize the collaborative effort between the Wilmington Police Department, especially Detectives Tom Curley and Pete Leccia of the Criminal Investigation Division, and the Attorney General’s Office for the successful result of this two-year investigation,” said Wilmington Police Chief Michael Szczerba. “Some very dangerous criminals will now spend a long period of time behind bars. Much of the violence that plagues some of our City neighborhoods stems from gang activity. As part of our Safe Communities Initiative, members of gangs are being warned to change their behaviors and lives, or, should the violence they perpetrate continue, the police, Probation and Parole officers, prosecutors and federal agencies will collaborate to hold them accountable.”

On March 16, following a one month trial in New Castle County Superior Court, defendants Kevin “Jr. Black” Rasin, age 23 of Clayton, and Mark “Guntown” Taylor, age 28 of Wilmington were convicted in the attacks. They, along with Trapstars member Terrence Mills, received the following sentences today before Superior Court Judge Richard R. Cooch:

Kevin Rasin, convicted at trial of Gang Participation, First Degree Murder for the shooting death of gang rival Jose Charriez, Attempted Murder, Conspiracy, Possession of a Firearm By a Person Prohibited, and Possession of a Firearm During the Commission of a Felony, was sentenced to life without parole.

Marc Taylor, convicted at trial of Gang Participation, Assault, Possession of a Firearm by a Person Prohibited, Possession of a Firearm During the Commission of a Felony, and Possession of Cocaine, was sentenced to 15 ½ years in prison.

Terrence Mills, who earlier pled guilty to Gang Participation, Manslaughter for the death of Alvan Butcher, and Possession of a Firearm During the Commission of a Felony was sentenced to 16 years in prison.

In addition to the sentences handed down today, Trapstars member Darnell Flowers, who earlier pled guilty to Gang Participation, Robbery, and Conspiracy, will be sentenced on a future date. Moreover, five additional members of Trapstars were convicted and sentenced in connection with these crimes prior to the February, 2012 trial in which Rasin and Taylor were convicted.

The case was prosecuted by Deputies Attorney General John Downs, Ipek Medford, and Sarita Wright.

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